

# Child TRENDS<sup>®</sup> RESEARCH BRIEF

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## *Estimated Percentage of Females Who Will Become Teen Mothers: Differences Across States*

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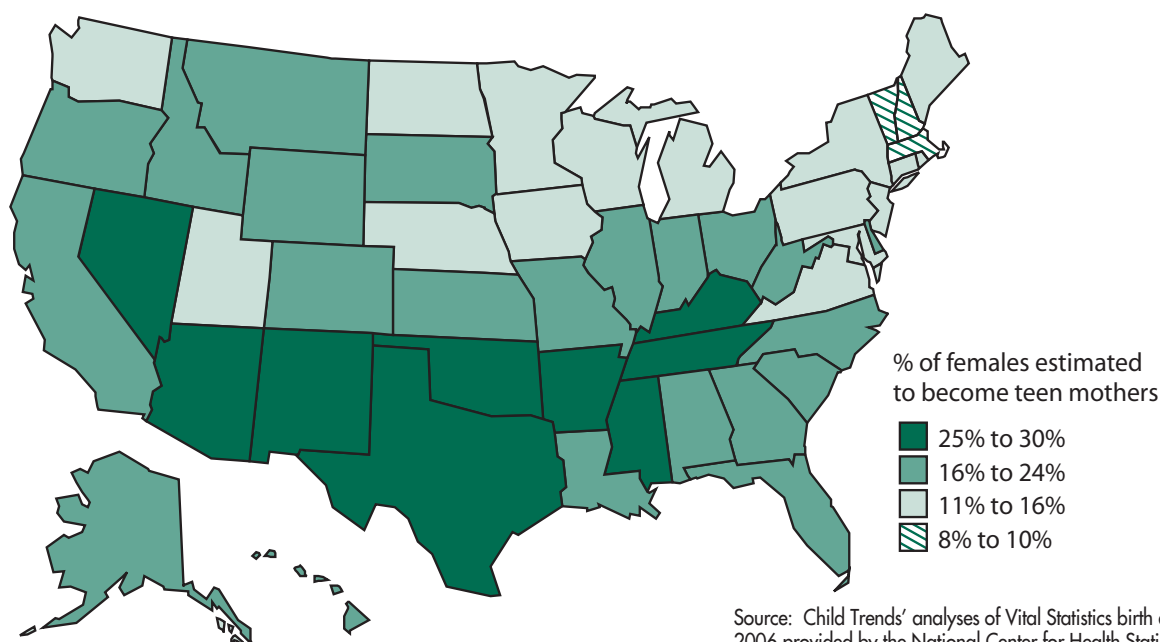
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**Overview.** In 2006, the teen birth rate rose for the first time since 1991. Between 2005 and 2006, the birth rate increased 3 percent for teens aged 15-17 and 4 percent for teens aged 18-19.<sup>4</sup> Teenage childbearing has negative consequences both for the mothers involved and for their children. For example, teen mothers and their children experience poorer educational, health, economic, and developmental outcomes than do women who delay childbearing beyond their teen years and their children. Moreover, this is the case even after accounting for the fact that teen mothers tend to be from disadvantaged backgrounds prior to giving birth.<sup>1,2,7</sup> Given such evidence, policymakers, program providers, and the general public share a keen interest in preventing early motherhood.

This Research Brief provides new state-level information on teen childbearing. To produce the brief, Child Trends analyzed the most recent data on births by state (2006) to estimate the percentage of females who will become mothers before age 20. Statistics on teen childbearing usually are presented in terms of birth rates (the number of births per 1,000 females). Calculating the percentage of females who are estimated to become teen mothers provides additional information that will allow policymakers and program providers to better understand how many young women in their respective states are at risk of early childbearing.

Across the country, the estimated proportion of females who will become teen mothers decreased from 25 percent in 1991 to 18 percent in 2006. However, our analyses show that states vary widely in the estimated percentage of females who will have a baby during their teen years, ranging from less than 10 percent in states with the lowest teen birth rates to 30 percent in the state with the highest teen birth rate.

**Figure 1** States with a high percentage of females who are estimated to become teen mothers are primarily concentrated in the South and Southwest.



## PERCENTAGE OF FEMALES ESTIMATED TO BECOME TEEN MOTHERS, BY STATE, 2006

Overall, more than one in six females is projected to become a teen mother. Based on 2006 first-birth and population data, an estimated 18 percent of females nationwide will become teen mothers.

**The estimated percentage of females becoming teen mothers declined between 1991 and 2006.** Reflecting a drop in teen birth rates between 1991 and 2006, the estimated percentage of females becoming teen mothers declined from 25 percent in 1991 to 18 percent in 2006 (see Table 2). The 2006 estimate is slightly higher than the 2005 estimate of 17 percent, which reflects the recent increase in the teen birth rate between 2005 and 2006.

**There is considerable variation across states in the percentage of females likely to become teen mothers – from 8 percent to 30 percent.** We estimated that in 9 states, concentrated primarily in the South and Southwest, 25 percent or more of females will become teen mothers. These states, listed in order from highest- to lowest-percentage of females estimated to become teen mothers, included Mississippi, New Mexico, Arizona, Texas, Arkansas, Nevada, Oklahoma, Kentucky, and Tennessee (see Figure 1, state rankings in Table 1 and Table 2). In contrast, in only three states—New Hampshire, Vermont, and Massachusetts—were less than 10 percent of females estimated to become teen mothers.

**State-level rankings on the likelihood of becoming a teen mother mirror traditional state rankings based on teen birth rates.** The five states with the highest estimated percentage of females who will become teen mothers also had the five highest teen birth rates, with rates of 62 or more births per 1,000 females between the ages of 15 and 19 in 2006, compared with a national rate of 42 per 1,000 females in this age group. Meanwhile, the five states in which females had the lowest likelihood of becoming a teen mother had birth rates that were less than 28 per 1,000 females in this age group (see Table 2). Rankings based on the two measures (i.e., percentages and rates), however, are not identical for all states due to differences in the age-specific birth rates and the population distribution within each state.

## DISCUSSION

At the national level, the estimated proportion of females who will become teen mothers decreased from 25 percent in 1991 to 18 percent in 2006. This

**Table 1**

### 2006 State-Level Rankings of the Percentage of Females Estimated to Become Teen Mothers

Ranking	State of residence	% of females estimated to become teen mothers, 2006
1	Mississippi	30%
2	New Mexico	29%
3	Arizona	28%
4	Texas	28%
5	Arkansas	28%
6	Nevada	27%
7	Oklahoma	26%
8	Kentucky	25%
9	Tennessee	25%
10	Georgia	24%
11	Alabama	24%
12	South Carolina	23%
13	Louisiana	23%
14	North Carolina	22%
15	Wyoming	21%
16	Alaska	21%
17	Missouri	20%
18	Florida	20%
19	West Virginia	20%
20	Indiana	19%
21	Hawaii	19%
22	Colorado	19%
23	Kansas	18%
24	Delaware	18%
25	Montana	18%
26	Idaho	18%
27	California	18%
28	Ohio	17%
29	South Dakota	17%
30	Illinois	17%
31	Oregon	16%
32	Virginia	15%
33	Maryland	15%
34	Michigan	15%
35	Washington	15%
36	Iowa	14%
37	Utah	14%
38	Nebraska	14%
39	Wisconsin	13%
40	Pennsylvania	13%
41	Minnesota	12%
42	Maine	12%
43	New Jersey	11%
44	New York	11%
45	Rhode Island	11%
46	North Dakota	11%
47	Connecticut	10%
48	Massachusetts	9%
49	Vermont	9%
50	New Hampshire	8%

**U.S. Total\* 18%**

Source: Birth data are from the National Center for Health Statistics Vital Statistics System Birth Data files for 2006. Population data from U.S. Census Bureau \*U.S. Total includes District of Columbia, not shown.

pattern represents a positive trend; nevertheless, in 2006, there were 435,436 births to females aged 15 to 19. Additionally, states vary substantially in the estimated percentage of females who will become teen mothers. Regardless of where they live, though, teen mothers and their children face economic, educational, and socioemotional challenges. Those who have a baby in their early teens are also at risk of having another baby while still a teenager, which is linked to even poorer outcomes for mothers and children.<sup>3</sup> Teen childbearing is therefore a substantial concern among state policymakers and local program providers.

This *Research Brief* provides a different lens through which to view teen childbearing. Whereas other state-level teen childbearing statistics generally show the number of births per 1,000 females, our estimates of the percentage of females who will become teen mothers allow state officials and local program providers to better understand what proportion of young females in their respective states are at risk of early childbearing. Expanding our state-level knowledge of teen childbearing is important in order to develop strategies to reduce the risk of teenage motherhood and to address the negative outcomes that result from early childbearing.

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## ABOUT THE DATA SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY USED FOR THIS BRIEF

Child Trends drew on two sets of statistics to determine the percentage of females projected to become teen mothers. We used data on first births from the 1991 and 2006 Vital Statistics Systems Birth Data files—gathered and disseminated by the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS).<sup>5</sup> We also used population data that originated from the 1991 and 2006 NCHS Bridged-Race Population Estimates, which draw from the U.S. Census Bureau.<sup>6</sup> We calculated the percentage of females who had a first birth in each age group (a single year of age for ages 15-19) by dividing the number of first births to females in that age group by the population of females in that age group. In making these calculations, we adjusted for the percentage of the population that already had a first birth. For instance, the population of 16-year-olds at risk of giving birth to a first child in 2006 was reduced by the estimated percentage of teens that had already given birth by age 15. We then added the percentages for ages 15 - 19 to create the estimated percentage of females projected to have a baby before age 20 nationwide and for each state.

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**Table 2**

### Estimated Percentage of Females Who Will Become Teen Mothers and Teen Birth Rates, by State, 2006

State of residence	State ranking, % of females estimated to become teen mothers	% of females estimated to become teen mothers	Number of births to mothers aged 15-19	Birth Rate (Births per 1,000 females)			State ranking for 15-19 birth rate
				Ages 15-17	Ages 18-19	Ages 15-19	
Alabama	11	24	8,537	28	94	54	12
Alaska	16	21	1,101	19	93	44	19
Arizona	3	28	12,824	34	109	62	5
Arkansas	5	28	5,946	31	114	62	4
California	27	18	52,800	22	68	40	27
Colorado	22	19	6,719	24	76	44	20
Connecticut	47	10	2,875	12	41	24	47
Delaware	24	18	1,263	23	68	42	23
Florida	18	20	25,384	23	82	45	17
Georgia	10	24	17,693	28	97	54	10
Hawaii	21	19	1,619	21	73	41	24
Idaho	26	18	2,140	18	72	39	30
Illinois	30	17	17,752	23	66	40	29
Indiana	20	19	9,549	21	80	44	21
Iowa	36	14	3,495	16	57	33	38
Kansas	23	18	4,109	20	76	42	22
Kentucky	8	25	7,412	26	103	55	9
Louisiana	13	23	8,628	28	91	54	11
Maine	42	12	1,133	10	52	26	44
Maryland	33	15	6,705	18	59	34	35
Massachusetts	48	9	4,724	11	36	21	48
Michigan	34	15	12,322	17	60	34	34
Minnesota	41	12	5,090	14	50	28	41
Mississippi	1	30	7,404	40	113	68	1
Missouri	17	20	9,183	23	83	46	16
Montana	25	18	1,283	18	76	40	28
Nebraska	38	14	2,112	16	59	33	36
Nevada	6	27	4,287	28	111	56	7
New Hampshire	50	8	865	8	36	19	50
New Jersey	43	11	7,159	12	47	25	46
New Mexico	2	29	4,628	36	109	64	2
New York	44	11	17,442	13	44	26	45
North Carolina	14	22	14,701	26	87	50	14
North Dakota	46	11	633	13	43	27	43
Ohio	28	17	15,872	20	72	40	26
Oklahoma	7	26	7,227	30	107	60	6
Oregon	31	16	4,285	18	66	36	31
Pennsylvania	40	13	13,599	17	52	31	39
Rhode Island	45	11	1,127	18	39	28	42
South Carolina	12	23	8,175	29	89	53	13
South Dakota	29	17	1,123	19	72	40	25
Tennessee	9	25	10,784	27	101	55	8
Texas	4	28	53,093	36	107	63	3
Utah	37	14	3,498	16	59	34	33
Vermont	49	9	468	8	39	21	49
Virginia	32	15	9,105	17	62	35	32
Washington	35	15	7,110	15	64	33	37
West Virginia	19	20	2,589	21	80	45	18
Wisconsin	39	13	6,015	16	55	31	40
Wyoming	15	21	850	18	92	47	15
<b>U.S. Total, 2006*</b>	<b>— —</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>435,436</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>— —</b>
<b>U.S. Total, 1991*</b>	<b>— —</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>519,577</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>— —</b>

Source: Birth data are from the National Center for Health Statistics Vital Statistics System Birth Data files for 1991 and 2006. Population data from U.S. Census Bureau \*U.S. Total includes District of Columbia, not shown